

# AVALANCHE ADVISORY

<b>U.S. FOREST SERVICE</b>	<b>FORECASTER: Davis</b>
<b>IDAHO PANHANDLE AVALANCHE CENTER</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE: 01/06/2012</b>
<b>DATE ISSUED: 01/06/2012 0730</b>	<b>OUTLOOK: 01/07-08/2012</b>
This report does not apply to local ski areas within the forecast region and the hazard rating will remain valid through midnight January 6, 2012. Special thanks to Idaho Parks and recreation for sponsoring this avalanche advisory.	Thanks Silver Mountain Ski Patrol for their Thursday pit data from the backside of Wardner Peak. Thanks also to James Roland and the Selkirk Powder Co. for their observations from Uleda Ridge near Schweitzer.


## WEATHER

**TODAY:** Mostly cloudy is the weather forecast with daytime temps in the low to mid 20s, light winds out of the SW, and a very thin chance of snow. In the mountains at 0600, it is about 20 degrees, light wind.


**TONIGHT:** Mostly cloudy, 20 percent chance of very light snowfall, temperatures in the high teens, and light westerly winds.

**OUTLOOK:** The broken record is skipping on mostly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of snow, daytime highs in the mid 20s, night-time lows in the high teens, and light to moderate W/SW winds. Temperatures could warm up by Sunday afternoon so be aware of softening surface layers on steep sunny aspects. **Avalanche danger will remain as stated with the expected weather for the outlook period.**

**Selkirk and Cabinet mountains:** In the Cabinet Mountains yesterday we found 4 feet of snow on a SE and N aspect. What we were looking at in the pack is basically numerous ice crusts layered in between faceted, sugary snow. The upper most crust is breakable with last Friday's snow underneath and that's what we saw sliding last week and have reports of human triggered slides on about 6-8 inches deep on SE/E/NE aspects. We also found well-developed surface hoar in both N and SE pits and got moderate but clean shears. This layer is 1.5-2 feet down and presently bridged, meaning your weight is supported, by the upper crusts. But, the observations from Selkirk Powder Co. say you could hit this layer on convex terrain, rollovers, or places broken up by rock outcrops. Avalanche danger is rated **MODERATE** on wind-loaded aspects, and convex terrain, steeper than 35 degrees above 5,000 feet. The avalanche danger as LOW on non wind-loaded slopes less than 35 degrees.

<b>2 Moderate</b>		Heightened avalanche conditions on specific terrain features. Evaluate snow and terrain carefully; identify features of concern	Natural avalanches unlikely; human-triggered avalanches possible.	Small avalanches in specific areas; or large avalanches in isolated areas.
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**St. Regis Basin and Silver valley:** At Lookout Pass yesterday Carole and Dan found a structurally weak snowpack averaging 3 feet in depth. They experienced a wintry mix of weather in their travels and they definitely noted wind-loading on the ridges from an E/NE wind. When they experience a structurally weak snowpack it means that there are weak layers in the pack, in this case it is surface hoar buried about 1 foot and faceted snow on a crust closer to the surface, but they can take *some* stress. They may not slide on their own but could with a little persuasion in the right/wrong spot. Carole says the wrong spot would be on steeper wind-loaded aspects. On Wardner Peak it looks like a similar situation exists with moderate shears in sugary snow on a crust about 2 feet deep. Some bridging from crusts exists but don't count on that improving the stability everywhere. Avalanche danger is rated **CONSIDERABLE** on wind-loaded aspects steeper than 35 degrees above 5,000 feet. The avalanche danger as MODERATE on non wind-loaded slopes less than 35 degrees.

<b>3 Considerable</b>		Dangerous avalanche conditions. Careful snowpack evaluation, cautious route-finding and conservative	Natural avalanches possible; human-triggered avalanches likely.	Small avalanches in many areas; or large avalanches in specific areas; or very large avalanches in isolated areas.
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Be on your toes in your terrain selection today and this weekend. Where you find lighter snow and powder conditions, yes they do exist, be aware that you may more easily trigger the buried surface hoar. Dig down 2-3 feet, isolate a column, and do a quick shear test. If it pops out easily, stay off steep slopes there. Watch steep rollovers on big exposed terrain. On Sunday if it warms enough, watch the surface layers over last week's crust that was sliding naturally 6-8 inches deep.

The next avalanche advisory will be issued January 13<sup>th</sup>.

Contact: Kevin Davis (208) 265-6686, Ed Odegaard (208) 245-6209, or John Olson (208) 265-6635  
This message is available by calling (208) 765-7323 or toll-free at 1-866-489-8664.

In Sandpoint, these classes are currently scheduled.

Jan. 10, **“Fire and Ice, Risk Assessment and Situational Awareness.”**

Feb. 10, **“Ten Years of Avalanche Fatalities in North Idaho.”**

**These classes are *free to the public* and will be held from 6-8PM in the Conference Room of the New Forest Service Building in Sandpoint,, 1602 Ontario St.,, west of town on the way to Dover.. Call Kevin Davis at 265-6686 or John Olson at 946-3378 if you have a group that is interested in attending..**

In the Silver Valley, these classes are currently scheduled.

January 21, “Avalanche Awareness, Route Finding, and Rescue

**In the Silver Valley the class is conducted at the Silver Valley Forest Service Building in Smelterville at 10AM.. The field session,, beacon practice and rescue training will be held at Mullan Pass the same day..**

**Contact Dan Frigard at 783-2131.**

**In St. Maries,** Ed Odegaard is conducting an avalanche workshop at the St. Maries Forest Service on January 26<sup>th</sup> from 5-8pm. Don’t miss the chili feed starting at Scheffy’s in Avery on January 14<sup>th</sup> where Ed will talk about avalanche factors and dig a pit on the ride at Rutledge Saddle, sounds like a hoot.

The State of Idaho Parks and Recreation Department in cooperation with the IPNF-AC, is conducting (**Free**) avalanche workshops for snowmobilers this winter in Coeur d’ Alene January 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, Sandpoint January 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. For more information go to the Idaho Parks and Recreation Department website at <http://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/recreation/snowmobileeducation.aspx>, or call Marc Hildesheim, North Region Trails Specialist, at (208) 769-1511.

Check out these websites from our Neighbors for more information:

<http://www.glacieravalanche.org/currentadvisory.cfm>

<http://www.nwac.us/>

<http://www.avalanche.ca/>

**Have a safe and pleasant Holiday!!!!**